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DRAMA

MAY MCMXXV

THE JOURNAL OF THE BRITISH DRAMA LEAGUE

THE BEST PLAYS OF THE MONTH

According to Ivor Brown

SOMETHING of Easter's chilly winds penetrated the London theatres and April will not be fruitful in rich memories. To begin with, Mr. Hastings Turner let down his admirers with "The Sea Urchin," in which the salt of his wit was strewn very thin while the sugar of Miss Peggy O'Neil's acting was too lavishly spread. That the author of "Iris Intervenes" and "Lilies of the Field," has the power to write a fine comedy is obvious. "The Sea Urchin" may be dismissed as an excursion on the lower slopes which lost its humble way.

A feature of last month was the distaste shown by the populus for the popular, "The Sea Urchin" might have out-distanced "Paddy the Next Best Thing" and did nothing of the kind. The costly failure of the "Kismet" revival was equally surprising. Did "Hassan" exhaust the drawing powers of the gorgeous East? Or was it that the lovers of Baghdad were disappointed by the absence of camels and solid canvas bazaar-scapes? Ernst Stern's curtains, fantastic and symbolical, seemed to me far more attractive than the usual full spread of canvas and I loathe livestock on the stage; but the gods apparently thought otherwise.

Mr. Sutton Vane, in "Overture," reversed the process of "Outward Bound," and his policy of beginning before life's beginning was well enough worked out to suggest a future for this play of the hidden past.

Mr. Noel Coward has caused an outcry with "Fallen Angels," whose theme is sordid and whose treatment airy. The outcry, I think, is due to Mr. Coward's adoption of the frank, French manner. The

old convention of leers and winks and suggestive antics in a flat whose walls are all doors, has been discarded in favour of plain statement. There is incidental wit, brilliance of acting, and a perfunctory ending. It is slap-dash work without attention to detail. The characterisation is superficial, the two women being exactly similar puppets. But that Mr. Coward can pull the strings with extraordinary deftness is undeniable. On the other hand his libretto for the new Cochran revue "On With the Dance," shows his pre-occupation with sex to be limiting his powers.

It was good to have Mr. Barry Jackson in charge of another London theatre and his production of "Caesar and Cleopatra" at the Kingsway should meet with full success. For it comes on the top of a Shavian wave in public taste and it brings back a magnificent and too rarely acted piece. Mr. Shelving's curtains and Mr. Ayliff's production prove that this play can be decoratively and rapidly given in full on a small stage and Miss FFrangcon-Davies, as the Shavian Cleopatra, half-vixen, half-ninny, beflowers the stage with beauty at every movement.

Amateur actors are the butt of "The Torch-bearers" in which Miss Marie Tempest and Miss Athene Seyler put up some admirable fooling. Little theatres and their players in this country bear no relation to the half-baked clowns here shown, but the "rag" comes off and no amateur actor will resent it. The Lena Ashwell Players at the Century Theatre have put in a good month, following up a first-rate presentation of Masefield's "Good Friday," with St. John Ervine's "The Ship," which was their first venture in producing "for a run."

A "FIRST NIGHT" IN B.C. 458

By Elsie Fogerty

PICTURE yourselves in Athens, in early April, under Grecian skies, in the year 485 B.C.

It is the festival of the god of the vine Dionysos; the god of dreams, of illusion, of revelry, and so of dramatic representation.

Dramatic poetry is under the patronage of Apollo, and of the stately muses of comedy and tragedy. But the theatre is the temple of the Vine God, a sacred place, where rude or turbulent action is a sacrilege.

His festivals, therefore, are celebrated by a great dramatic competition. Three sets of three tragedies each called a "Trilogy," have been "given a chorus." Some wealthy citizen has undertaken to defray the cost of the long training and of the costly dresses of the chorus, with their borders of rich goldsmiths' work, as his contribution to the State. A pleasing way surely of paying one's income tax.

All the people of Athens and her tributary states take part in the festival. The theatre holds about fifteen thousand people.

Come and stand upon its stage. In front of you rise tiers of stone seats, running up to the sheer side of the Acropolis. Above the Parthenon the sun is rising, and perhaps already glints on the gold-tipped spear of Athene Promachos, the goddess of victories, wrought out of the bronze shields of the conquered Persians in thank offering for Marathon and Platea.

Later on, the whole theatre will be in sunlight, the front rows of seats consisting of marble thrones for the priests of the hundred shrines of Athens; the statue of the god himself in their midst.

Between the seats and the stage on which we stand, runs the horseshoe-shaped "orchestra," paved in marble, with a deep runnel at the edge to carry off rain water, and the drink offerings poured on the altar which stands in the centre.

Left and right, between the seats and the wall on either side of the stage, run the

broad passages or "Paradoi," by which the audience enter, and after the doors are closed the chorus and certain actors use them to reach the scene. To the left lies the city of Athens, to the right, the entrance leads to the street of Tombs, and so to the open country; from this results the universal convention in Greek drama that, when an actor enters from the Stage L, he is supposed to be coming from the city or from some place near by. When he comes from the R he is from the country or some distant place.

The theatre is filling rapidly, with a festival crowd, in robes of white and crimson, saffron, purple and gold. All wreathed with flowers in honour of the god.

Let us go and claim the seats our slaves have kept for us, and take our places on the cushions they have provided. There is not much room to spare in the crowded theatre; we get only fifteen inches apiece. Considerably less than in a London County Council tram-car!

Now, as we look back at the stage, we see it represents the front of a palace, in the back wall are three doors, through the centre one the principal actor will presently appear. There are never more than three actors employed in a Greek tragedy. Only a few years ago the second actor even was a novelty, introduced by the great producer Æschylos, whose reforms revolutionized the Athenian stage. No woman ever appeared on the public stage in Athens, though we see priestesses amongst the foremost ranks of the audience. It is the third day of the festival. The first was consecrated to the great procession, in which all the dramatic performers took part. On the second, two very disappointing plays had been given. One actually stopped by the audience, who showed their displeasure by clicking their metal sandals against the back of their seats, and throwing olives, figs, and even a few stones at the unfortunate actors. As these last fell, some wit observed with a

laugh at the principal player, "Now he will be able to build himself that house he is always wanting."

To-day the theatre has been thronged long before dawn. There are rumours of a third trilogy which will more than make up for the disappointment of the first two; there are to be marvellous new effects. There is talk of a second secret chorus who will not walk in the procession. The poet himself has superintended everything; one of his scenic inventions—cubes painted with a different scene on each face, and revolving to set the central building in a different background—has been installed on either side of the stage. So when the chorus of fifteen passes on, led by Xenocles to make libation, at the central altar, all attention is fixed. The leader of the dancers, or Coryphæus, is Telestes, the greatest mime of his day, for Greek dancing is a matter of gesture and posing, not of steps. "If a man have flexible *arms*," a proverb said, "let him learn to dance."

The play is known to deal with the fortunes of the house of the Atridae. As the applause which greets Telestes dies out, and the chorus of Argive citizens passes out to left of the stage, a solitary figure is seen against the sky on the roof of the Scenic palace. It is the watchman waiting for the beacon fire from Troy. He tells of the weary watch, the trouble brooding over the house in the absence of the King of Men. Suddenly with a shout he is gazing away in the distance, the beacon has blazed up. Troy has fallen and Agamemnon is returning. The chorus sweep in from the city near by, singing the fate of Troy the long strife for Argive Helen. The palace doors open and the queen comes out between her soldiers, advancing to the steps which lead down to the orchestra. The actor towers above the chorus raised on the tall "Cothurni," patten-like sandals, which add some eight or nine inches to his height, on his head he wears the mask and raised head dress or "Onkos," which adds still further to his apparent height, while the heavy robes of purple and gold are padded out in proportion and the whole figure attains superhuman dignity.

Clytemnestra speaks with the chorus of her lord's return, and then along the Eastern Parados the messenger comes run-

ning with news of the King's approach. The Queen goes in to her preparation, and the chaunt of the chorus relieves the tension of waiting till the chariot of the King of Men appears. The chorus greet their lord, swinging back before him, in chaunted anapaests, and his chariot draws up before the palace with the veiled Cassandra at his side. The queen reappears. She speaks her long drawn speech of welcome, her slaves spread the purple carpets for the king's feet and with her mysterious prayer to "Zeus the perfecter," to fulfil all her intent, they pass into the house.

On Cassandra falls the horror of vision sent her by Apollo, the bloodstained lintel, the murdered children, whose ghosts haunt the threshold, and wailing her fate and Agamemnon's, she unbinds from her brow the fillets of the god whose handmaid she has been, and passes in to her end.

On the chorus and the spectators the horror of the coming doom has grown. The death cry of the murdered king rings out from the house, and as the chorus, in confused simultaneous speech seem about to hurry on to the stage itself, in an attempted rescue, the middle door rolls back, the front of the palace divides to allow of the rolling forward of a small platform, on which stands the figure of the terrible queen, the copper axe in her hand and dead at her feet the king and Cassandra.

The second part of the trilogy had much that was new, in the sympathy of the chorus with the royal children, the return and recognition of Orestes. The skill with which so many parts were divided among the three available actors was much admired; only once the unnatural silence of Pylades when his mask and dress were being worn by a supernumerary, was noted as a blemish.

The play ended with the vengeance of the son on his mother, unseen as always on the Greek stage, till the doors rolled back again and the queen and her craven lover were shown dead, beside the stricken avenger.

For the third play the cubes on either side revolve, changing the scene to the rocky shrine of Delphos where Orestes and his friend must journey, to purify the son from the guilt of his mother's blood, and

A "FIRST NIGHT" IN B.C. 458

free him from the awful visitation of the Furies which pursue him. Presently a new kind of change takes place in the back wall of the stage. It rolls back altogether, showing the whole space between the door pillars and so indicating the interior of the temple-shrine of Apollo, dimly seen from the sunlight of the great theatre without. Here are the suppliants, and the presence of the gods themselves, with the outline of sleeping figures away in the shadows behind. Already a murmur of fear and astonishment runs through the audience at sight of them. Presently Crestes passes away to seek healing in Athens herself, and then through the sleeping forms the spirit of Clytemnestra steals, awakening the messengers of her vengeance. They spring to their feet and rush out into the full light of day. At the sight a cry of horror goes up from all the theatre. These are indeed the "Terrible ones," of whom they have heard.

The dread Erinyes of the mighty Gods,
Their swift, sure-footed messengers of ill.

Snake crowned, snake entwined, with faces baleful as the Medusa, they would have been striking in their first impression even to a modern audience, but to those for whom their existence was a living reality, and who, besides were unaccustomed to the realistic effect of theatrical illusion, the sight was almost unendurably thrilling. "Women fainted," we are told, and "men shuddered and turned pale." Their dread incantations, the weird shrieking refrain, with its ever rising intensity, their fierce reproaches from one to another for the escape of their victim, the final rush of headlong pursuit to follow him, all these left the audience breathless with emotion hardly knowing whether to commend or to condemn.

They were not long in doubt. All the intensified horror served only as a foil to the balanced calm of the last scene, where the hero and his ghastly accusers stood face to face before the mimic presentation of the High Court of Athens, the Areopagus.

The constitution of that ancient tribunal had been attacked by innovators. In a scene rising to the gravest and most sublime beauty the old poet showed the court inspired by Athene Parthenos her-

self, weighing the deed of the accused, in scales of absolute justice, and baffling the blood hunger of the hideous Erinyes, who dare not cross its threshold. Such a scene picturing their own greatness could not fail to transport an Athenian audience. And as the exquisite close of forgiveness and reconciliation fell on their ears, the very Furies themselves gained their sacred retreat beneath the Acropolis, where henceforth:—

Eumenides, the gentle ones all seeing,
They call them here. It may be other names
Befit them elsewhere.

There was no need for the judges to weigh and ponder their decision; no need for the anxious counting of the five tablets from the urns of judgment. From every bench in the crowded theatre rang out the verdict:

"Æschylos, Æschylos! Victor with the
Oresteia."

So absolute was the victory that the names of the other two competitors were not even recorded.

The old poet was led into the orchestra to be crowned with the ivy wreath of victory.

Six years later it is recorded of him that when dying in Sicily, he made mention of none of his fame as a poet, but wrote the name of his father and of his city. And that the grove of Marathon, and the Medes who disembarked there were witnesses to his valour.

The names of the three great dramatists of Athens are linked with that conflict. Æschylos wrote the triumph song for victory. Sophocles, as the most beautiful youth in Greece, then fifteen years old, sang it in the celebrations in the year of Salamis, the great sea fight where the Greeks chaunted it as they drove back the Persian ships. And on the day of that great victory, one of the Athenian woman refugees gave birth to a little son, who was to be the poet Euripides, the last of the three great dramatists.

The Stoneland Players are hoping to give two performances each of "Iphigenia in Tauris" and "Œdipus Tyrannus" in the middle of July at Stonelands, West Hoothly, Sussex. Full particulars can be obtained from Mrs. Godwin King, West Hoothly.



SCENE.

Gordon Craig

One of 20 designs etched in 1907 by Mr. Gordon Craig. These etchings are exhibited at the British Empire Exhibition in the Palace of Arts. Under the same title "Scene" a book appeared in 1923 from the Oxford University Press and contained collotypes of all the etchings together with a text by the artist.

THE THEATRE IN POLAND

THE theatre season in Poland, and in Warsaw especially has promised or supplied many new and interesting performances. Among the novelties Bernard Shaw's "St. Joan" at the Teatr Polski (Polish theatre). The direction is very proud of the fact that they have secured the very first performance of this play on the Continent, and professionals and amateurs have alike looked forward with much interest to the production. Two other authors of Anglo-Saxon race, by O'Niell and Vane, figure on the repertory of the Little Theatre, which devotes itself to the performance of plays of more intimate character suited to its smaller space. The opening of the National Theatre which was burnt down in 1919, was promised for October. This theatre bears something of the character of the Théâtre Français and during the years of Poland's captivity, played an important part in keeping alive the sentiment of national drama.

A new play of Jewreinow will be produced this season. Last year his drama, "That Which is Most Important," made a great and lasting impression, both on ac-

count of its literary worth and for the masterly presentation at the Polish Theatre. One of the first Polish literary critics, Mr. Eugene Swierczewski, has published a small book on the subject of Jewreinow, containing a subtle criticism of his work and tendencies. Of Polish young dramatic authors, both last season and this coming one, shows a goodly number. George Szaniawski last year made a successful hit with an original play, "The Bird," half satiric, half romantic.

A lady author, Mme. Magdalene Samozwaniec made her début as dramatist in the middle of September, and another lady, Mme. Marie Pawlikowska in October.

It will be seen by this short account, that there is plenty of life and movement in the Polish theatre world. Moreover, Poland possesses a large number of actors of talent and originality and should it be decided to send a company abroad, there is no doubt they would gain the applause and admiration of connoisseurs of all nationalities. The stumbling block, however, is the small knowledge of the Polish language possessed by foreigners.

K. MALECKA.

MADHOUSE DRAMA

EVERYONE, at present, seems to be abusing the theatre for something, for its dull drama, its indecent drama, its inaudible drama or its expensive drama. Nobody, however, has yet inveighed against the drama of the lunatic asylum which seems to be creeping slowly but surely upon us.

The trouble was started by Pirandello with his disturbing notions that life, as we see it, may not be quite so real (and hence not quite so important) as we have always taken it to be. But Pirandello—who knew his business—was unsettling only as drama should always be unsettling. It is not against him that I would write, but against the crowd of dramatists who have chosen to be influenced by him, and who are producing, as fast as their pens can carry them, plays which are far-fetched, obscure and deliberately "queer."

Two recent examples are Susan Glaspell's "The Verge," and "The Colonnade," by Stark Young. Both come from America, where, perhaps, mere eccentricity is more

readily accepted than in this country, and both might have been good plays if less hysterically written. As it is, however, both are full of lines and situations which, one would swear, were set down by their authors with no consideration as to whether they really meant anything, and for no better reason than that they would appear pretentious and unusual. Yet both these authors have been hailed as something akin to geniuses.

Surely it is a mistake to accept them in such great earnest. Genius may be eccentric, indeed, but it is never deliberately "queer." Shakespeare, who has been called "gentle," "genial," and "a bounder," has never been called a lunatic. Nor would he have achieved any better effects if he had been any less sane. One wonders what he would say if he could see this modern madhouse drama. Perhaps he would relapse into Macbeth-like meditation on the state of a theatre which produces so many plays in which "function is smother'd in surmise, and nothing is, but what is not."

G. GORDON YOUNG.

BRITISH DRAMA LEAGUE NOTES



THE JOURNAL OF THE BRITISH DRAMA LEAGUE

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Neither the Editor nor the Drama League as a whole accepts any responsibility for the opinions expressed in signed articles printed in this Journal.

THE Annual General Meeting of the League will be held on the last Friday in June, and full particulars of the arrangements will be given in our next number. The main purpose of the meeting is to receive the Report of the Council, to elect members of the Council for next year, and to consider any business or motion of which due notice has been given. By Rule VIII of our Constitution, any member desiring to bring forward any business at the Annual Meeting, must give notice thereof on or before the first day of June. Similarly, by Rule VII, nominations for vacancies on the Council must be in the hands of the Hon. Secretary on or before June 1. All such nominations must be in writing, signed by two members of the League as proposer and seconder, and accompanied by the consent in writing of the candidate to serve as a member of the Council if elected.

An important item on the Agenda will be the resolution passed at the Leeds Conference to the effect that the annual subscription of Affiliated Societies with a membership of over one hundred, should be raised by 10s. 6d. for every hundred members with a maximum subscription of £5 5s.

We have received many letters, and the B.B.C. have received more, making favourable comments on our series of seven Lecture Recitals on the History of the Drama, which concluded last month. One correspondent, a schoolmaster, particularly desired the text of Miss Fogerty's Talk on the Greek Stage, so that he might read it aloud to his class. We are glad to print this essay in its entirety in the present number, and would take the opportunity of thanking both the lecturers and those who sustained the parts in the various illustrative Recitals.

The London County Council is prepared to consider, not later than June 1, applications for dramatic art scholarships of which two are to be awarded this year, tenable for two years at the Royal Academy of Dramatic Art, Gower Street, W.C.1. The scholarships will be awarded to students between 16 and 20 years of age on July 31, 1925, who show special aptitude and promise for dramatic art. Applicants will be interviewed and required to recite certain test pieces and to read one or more unseen passages from Shakespeare or other author. If necessary the selected candidates may be required to undergo an educational test consisting of (1) an English essay, (2) one of the following subjects: arithmetic, a modern language, general knowledge. The candidates must be British subjects and their parents or guardians resident in the County of London. In addition to free instruction, the scholarships may carry a maintenance grant if the parents' income is below the limits prescribed in the general regulations for scholarships. Further details and forms of application may be had on application to the Education Officer at the County Hall, S.E.1.

THE OPEN-AIR THEATRE

By Eleanor Elder

AS the summer approaches, weather optimists (if the race is not extinct in this country) will begin to consider the advisability of open-air performances. To an impecunious group the saving in expenditure, the unlimited seating accommodation and the attraction that such productions usually prove, are factors in their favour to be taken into consideration. But the extreme uncertainty of the British climate must be reckoned with, and there are nine chances to one that the rain or wind may turn the whole affair into a fiasco. Alternative indoor arrangements are never satisfactory.

To be a true success an open-air play must be produced for the open-air, and should not be an indoor production transplanted, with its costumes and make-up designed for artificial lighting.

An ideal natural theatre is difficult to find. I have seen an old disused cockpit in a garden in Surrey, which would adapt itself admirably into a Greek theatre, and where the acoustics were excellent, weather permitting. The open-air theatre at Ranelagh Club is another example. The lake at the side and the artificial mound at the back making it excellent for sound. The Greek Theatre at Bradfield College is a third example, the temple making a sounding board for the voices of the players. These are conditions, however, not often found by community groups.

In choosing a site, one must be careful to discover what the actual position of the sun (if any) will be during the performance and avoid having it shining directly in the eyes of the audience or the players. One should also choose a place where either the stage or the audience can be on a slope; it does not matter which unless the slope is very steep, when it will be better from the point of view of the audience than the players. Try and get a place where the trees and bushes make a natural background and wings so that the players can make their entrances definitely, and the action of the play will take part in a limited area. This may not be necessary in a pageant or spectacular play, but it is essential when words are spoken. An entrance made from a distance in full view of the audience can

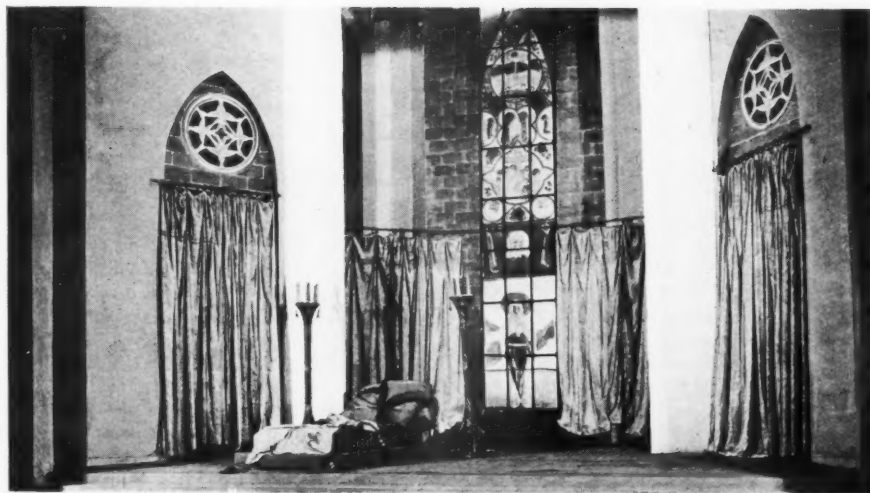
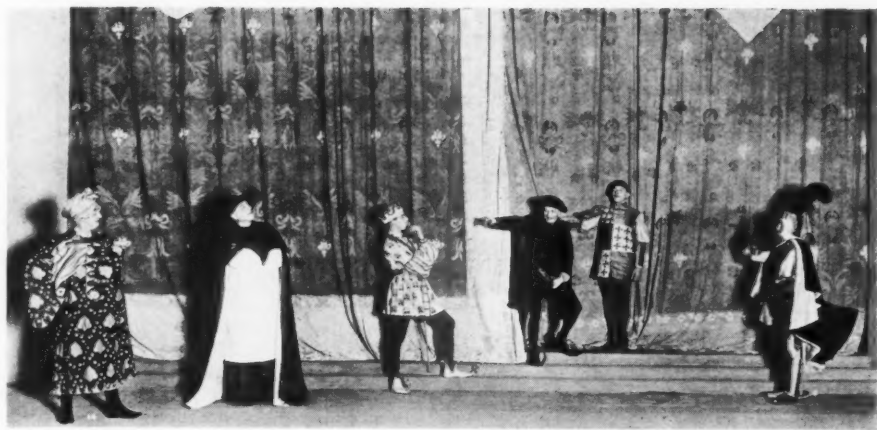
be made very effective in some cases, but it either hangs up the action of the play or takes the attention off the speakers. If the trees and bushes are not thick enough for the players to stand or pass behind unseen, they can be made more solid by tubs of plants and bushes, or hurdles covered with greenery. A very effective little stage was made in a garden where quaintly cut box hedges gave the exact setting required for a pastoral play. With a little trouble the same thing can be done by using portable trees and shrubs in tubs, as I have suggested.

A wooden stage built up in the middle of a garden is a hideous thing, and front or side curtains in an open-air performance are unpractical and ugly, unless the performance is being held at night and artificial lighting is used. Dressing-rooms should be weather tight; tents or huts with boarded floors as near as possible, but out of sight behind the screen of trees.

If music is required and it is possible to have an orchestra, however small, it is better than a piano which sounds very thin out of doors, however well played. If, nevertheless, only a piano is used, it should be placed on a low platform or wooden board to improve the sound, and to avoid damp.

In this climate it is perhaps safer to have the performance in a marquee or tent. In this case a stage and curtains is required, and the usual stage lighting. Care must be taken not to let the proscenium or structure on which the curtains are hung, touch the roof of the tent, as in the event of rain it would cause a serious leakage. The main difficulty with this tent theatre is the lighting. It is well nigh impossible to combat the daylight which spoils the effect of the artificial light; and bright sunshine outside is apt to make the curtains transparent.

Tents are not good for sound and are abominated by singers of experience. All the same surprisingly good performances have been given even under these conditions. Therefore I would say to any group which has the courage to attempt an open-air performance, go on and prosper! But choose your play carefully, and rehearse out of doors as much as possible.



TWO SCENES FROM "SAINT JOAN" AS RECENTLY PRODUCED BY THE HONG-KONG AMATEUR DRAMATIC CLUB AT THE THEATRE ROYAL, HONG-KONG. THE SCENERY AND DECORATIONS WERE PAINTED BY ALEXANDER CLIOS, R.I.A.A., FROM SETTINGS CONCEIVED BY W. SINCLAIR. THE COSTUMES WERE MADE BY MR. TSE PING SANG, OF MESSRS. AH MEN HING CHEONG AND CO., FROM DESIGNS BY MRS. F. CLEMES.

THE THEATRE OF THE PAST

A Causerie conducted by Allandyce Nicoll

IN this, the first of a series of research notes on the history of the theatre and of dramatic literature, a word or two may be permitted concerning the general object and scope of the series. It is fitting that the enlarged DRAMA should take into account the historical side of theatrical work. In spite of many years of tireless questing into the past, we have still much to learn. Still many aspects of dramatic literature and of theatrical convention have not been fully elucidated, and the theatre, the living theatre, may learn much from the apparently dry-as-dust researches of the scholars. This union of scholarship and of creative endeavour is well exemplified in Mr. Gordon Craig's periodical, *The Mask*, full of suggestive ideas concerning the creative and progressive side of the playhouse, yet full also of enthusiastic examination of old plans and old prints, partly for the sake of their historical value, partly in the hope that here in the past may lie buried some seeds which, properly tended, may develop and blossom in the future. The study table, therefore, is not something apart from the theatre outside. The two ever go hand-in-hand, and progress in years to come must arise from the fusion of scholarly research and of artistic imagination.

I do not propose here to contribute merely a set of research essays. I desire to make of this page a causerie wherein attention may be drawn to current investigation on the lines indicated above. Notices of important new volumes on the theatre may be included, and, as well, notes on various aspects of dramatic research. I should welcome, therefore, communications from any who are engaged on this study. Whatever use is made of these communications will, it is needless to state, be fully acknowledged. There is an opportunity here, I think, of providing a means whereby smaller, but not necessarily unimportant, items of information may be published and, if necessary, commented upon.

* * *

Mr. W. J. Lawrence, pioneer investigator into the mysteries of the Elizabethan stage, has been the first to send me a few such

notes. The first concerns a reference to coloured glasses enclosing lamps in the recently-published volume of Inigo Jones's masque designs (Malone and Walpole Societies, 1924, p. 14). As Mr. Lawrence points out, the device was simpler and more primitive than is there suggested, being merely Serlio's system of "chemists' bottles" filled with various coloured water behind which the lights were placed. These bottles were specifically noted in Jonson's "Entertainment of the King and Queen" at Theobalds' on May 22, 1607:

"A glorious place . . . erected with columns and architrave, frieze and cornice, in which were placed divers diaphanal glasses, filled with several waters, that showed like so many stones of orient and transparent hues."

* * *

Another note is given by Mr. Lawrence to the peculiar stage direction in John Day's "The Blind Beggar of Bethnal Green" (1659)—"Enter Captain Westford, Sill Clark." The second name Dr. E. K. Chambers takes to be that of an actor, possibly of Caroline days ("Elizabethan Stage," iii, 285). Here Mr. Lawrence presumes a MS. contraction and a compositor's misinterpretation, "Sill Clark" standing for "Will Carp [enter]." Whereas no actor is known of the name "Sill Clark," William Carpenter was with the Lady Elizabeth's men in 1611, with the Prince's men (by whom this play was acted) in 1619, and with Prince Charles's men in 1625. The supposition is, therefore, that the text as given in the quarto of 1659 was a revision made between 1619 and 1624. In further proof Mr. Lawrence notes the references to inter-act music and to "cornets," instruments apparently unknown on the "public" stages until 1608. The evidence for these latter statements is contained in an article on "A New Shakespearian Test," contributed to *The Criterion* for October, 1923.

One might add to Mr. Lawrence's elucidation that the "enter" at the end of Carpenter's name might, if slightly separated from the syllable preceding, well have been mistaken by a compositor for a reduplication of a stage direction and consequently omitted. Herein may lie the reason of the error.

NEWS FROM NORTH AND SOUTH

STOCKPORT GARRICK SOCIETY.

This famous society opened its fourth production of the season with a play, "Cupid Laughs," by R. M. Jones, and a one act play, "The Dark Lady of the Sonnets," by G. Bernard Shaw.

"Cupid Laughs" was first played by the Brooklands Society, and later by a group of Manchester players, and has been improved or otherwise, by different producers in its travels.

If exquisite costumes, powdered wigs, elaborate scenery and good lighting effects made for success the play had its chance. But, alas, the play is a poor one, long-drawn-out, becoming at times very boring. A lack of deportment in many of the players did not help the atmosphere, which ought to be one of fragrant grace. Iris Stockdale played well as the "Countess" and was very consistent, though at times a little too bourgeois. This, like the farcical exit, was the fault of producer or author. To drag a woman upstairs backwards is an old-time trick, and will always bring an applause, but is it worth it, particularly in poetic drama? Every word of A. Miller as "Cupid" could be heard, for which we thank her. Here the play is weak—Cupid is too long exposed for childish endurance, no wonder he becomes restless and spoils the illusion. Mollie Brown as "Marcelle" put up some lovely work. T. Ramberman as a sweet and graceful "Percinette," Mabel Wild was a commanding "Venus," truly an Amazon. But bad stagecraft to bring her down to play on footlights. Producer, Reginald Edge.

Surely, with the world of writers to choose from, the Stockport Society might find a play more worthy of its great name.

"The Dark Lady of the Sonnets" gained by its severe setting. Terrace with crude balustrade, walls of grim stone, postern gate with iron grating, an empty stage, clock chiming midnight. Atmosphere created before a word was spoken. As for Mary Eastwood as "Queen Elizabeth" there can be no two opinions; she was "Queen Elizabeth." This artist has the gift of creative genius, her work was delightful, those restless white hands in the sleep-walking scene haunt me with their beauty of expression. Hayward Hobson as Shakespeare was excellent in the lighter side of the character, bringing out all the humour of the part, at times bordering on to farce, which in this play is quite legitimate. His long speeches showed a lack of care and study of the sentiments, giving the dead letter of the written word. Herein the "Queen" scored, her long speeches were made a living thing. "The Dark Lady" was adequately played by A. Topez, and the "Beefeater" very robustly by C. Brooks. Play produced by Mary Eastwood.

P. J.

TOTTENHAM.

The Queen's Players will give a performance of "Major Barbara" at the St. George's Hall, Tottenham Court Road, on Saturday, May 16. Particulars may be obtained from Mr. Vernon Power, "Arcadia," Goulton Road, Clapton, E.5.

STREATHAM.

The Zodiac Dramatic Club is to be congratulated on their spirited performance of "The Rising Generation," by Wyn Weaver and Laura Leycester, which was given at the end of April. These players work well together, quite after the fashion of a practised Repertory Company. They are not afraid to emphasize their effects, and at the same time they cannot be accused of over-acting. The play chosen is an admirable one for amateur performance and two well-filled houses obviously enjoyed it. Better not to single out names from an almost uniformly able cast. But Miss Doris Dunn, the producer, can at least be given the praise due to her.

A NORTH COUNTRY EASTER PLAY IN WENSLEYDALE.

The Askrigg Bank Holiday Production of "Candida" by the Askrigg Players, had two outstanding facts in its performance: the absence of several of its most seasoned players from the play bill, and the harnessing of its more useful members in their places. This is a progressive action, rarely accomplished on account of its difficulties: but one which is valuable to the community.

The Askrigg Players gave "Candida." Their list from year to year makes good reading to those interested in drama: but the essential power behind this work comes out of student classes for literature, drama and poetry, held in the village for years, by Mr. Theodore Grubb.

THE G.P.O. PLAYERS.

SATURDAY, APRIL 18. BIRKBECK COLLEGE THEATRE.

Few will dispute that "The School of Scandal" is a most brilliant comedy. This brilliance coupled with the able producing of Miss Charlotte Davies, was the reason for the enthusiastic reception the play received.

The restlessness of many members of the company served to emphasise the repose of Mr. Wilfred Sellar's interesting study of the small part of Moses. Mr. Jack Scott's Charles Surface lacked diction, otherwise it would have been a good performance.

SHOREDITCH DRAMA SOCIETY.

The Shoreditch Drama Society are producing "The Devil's Disciple" on Monday, May 11, at the Shoreditch Town Hall. Reserved tickets 2s. 4d. and 1s. 2d. and (unreserved) 6d. can be obtained from the secretary, 9 Busk Street, Hackney Road, E2. The Society is very anxious to sell a sufficient number of tickets to cover the cost of production.

NORTHERN DRAMA LEAGUE.

The League brought their season to a close with Anton Tchekov's play, "Uncle Vanya." In this play they were able to maintain the high standard of their preceding productions.

The team work on the whole was good. The success of the play was due to the excellent work of Kathleen M'Bride as Sonya, Raymond Calvert as Uncle Vanya, and Wilfred Campfield as the Professor.

M. C. MIER.

NEWS FROM NORTH AND SOUTH

THE BENTON PLAYERS, RAWDON, LEEDS.

The Benton Players held its first At Home on Saturday, March 14, when A. A. Milne's comedy, "The Boy Comes Home," and Sir A. W. Pinero's "Playgoers," were produced. The acting in both these short plays was quite up to the usual standard of the Players, as was shown by the appreciation of the audience. The programme on this occasion was completed by several very good individual items from members of the Society.

On March 28 and 30, Oscar Wilde's comedy, "The Importance of Being Earnest," was produced. The success of the play was most gratifying, and all the actors deserve praise for the ease and naturalness with which they handled their various rôles.

At the Annual General Meeting of the Society on May 20, it is hoped to give a reading of "Everyman."

"THOMAS CHATTERTON."

A new play, with the above title, by Miss Josephine Knowles, one of our members, will be produced and acted by Frank Forbes-Robertson, for the first time, at the Theatre Royal, King's Lynn, Norfolk, on Friday, May 22. Also at the Hippodrome, Nuneaton, Warwickshire, in the last week in May.

PERFORMANCES OF "SOLOMON AND SHEBA" BY THE UN-NAMED SOCIETY, MANCHESTER.

On the front leaf of the programme of the Un-named Society's latest production, "Solomon and Sheba," Mr. F. Sladen-Smith, the author and producer of the play makes an attempt to disarm criticism of his amazing version of the Bible story by a playful and trite apology! Having accepted it in his own words as being "all quite inaccurate," we proceed to enjoy this extraordinary adventure in Mr. Sladen-Smith's native realm of whimsicalities with a zest that is only equalled by his own.

This Queen of Sheba, from her remarkable entrance onwards, is a passionate, almost savage, and entirely surprising creature who never "likes" but only "loves" and "hates" to the uttermost. She is marvellously played by Miss Ella Voysey with a make-up which for originality and effect baffles description.

Mr. Eric Newson's King Solomon, all-glorious without and so pitifully human within, is another great triumph in an already substantial repertoire. His attendant quintet of pretty foreign wives, who moved about collectively and yet were each distinctive in character and dress, were vivacious and attractive to a degree. In a caste so excellent that the minor parts were as effectively played as the principals it is scarcely possible to discriminate nor yet to mention all the players as one might wish to do. It is sufficient to say that the production is quite one of the most remarkable in every detail that the society has done. X.

THE ISIS PLAYERS.

The Isis Players (composed of old students of St. Hugh's) gave their second production on Wednesday, April 22, in the form of a triple bill consisting of Yeats's "The Hour Glass," Phæbe Hoffman's "Martha's Mourning," and Clifford Bax's "The Poetasters of Ispahan." The varied character of these plays was admirably brought out by the players, "Martha's Mourning" especially being distinguished by the very fine acting of Margaret Haig as the grandmother. All three plays were produced by Mary Dalston.

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

DEAR SIR,—Would you kindly publish these corrections of certain misconceptions in the review of the Greenleaf Elements on "Action" and "Speech," published in the April number of DRAMA.

1. "If Miss Smedley had kept rigidly to the classics, instead of using mainly her own plays as illustrations, one could imagine her text-books being hailed with delight by teachers," etc.

Three only of my plays, and those of Maxwell Armfield's, are used, as initial exercises, in the Greenleaf method, each of the seven sections of each text-book being then illustrated by technical examples in the form of eighteen plays by Shakespeare, Euripides, Oliver Goldsmith, Maeterlinck, Shaw, Barrie, W. S. Gilbert, William Poel's "Fratricide Punished" production, Edna Millay, Granville-Barker, Sutton Vane, Laurence Housman, Galsworthy, Jerome, Eugene O'Neil, Frank Bacon—all lumped together by your reviewer (surely a little prematurely) as "various classical dramas."

2. "A few years ago it was impossible to find a text-book which would prove helpful to amateur dramatic groups. . . . To-day it is a question rather of which to select of the many authorities available."

No other dramatic text-books have been published, either in England or America. Handbooks on play-writing, production, and acting exist, but nothing which gives a plan of systematic study capable of being worked out by amateur or professional, in class or home.

3. "To say, 'Bend your knees and you will give the impression of age,' seems to me to be working from the wrong end."

There is nothing corresponding to this sentence in the Greenleaf Elements.

"Old age and weakness may cramp the stride. Timidity and subservience may shorten it"; and again, "Stiff knees indicate acute convention, affectation, anything that stiffens the thought," are the only references to the subject—which merely confirm your reviewer's dictum, "a clear mental and emotional conception of a part cannot fail to show itself physically."

4. The price is 6s., not 3s. 6d., as stated.

Yours truly,

CONSTANCE SMEDLEY.

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(Part I, July 31—August 10. Part II, August 10—20.)

The interest to-day in the literary Drama of all ages is marked, and the Delegates hope that a course illustrating the development of the Drama in different countries and its culmination at different epochs may be welcome to a large number of students of literature and life. It is hoped that a programme of dramatic performances of representative plays may supplement the historical and critical lectures.

There will also be a special course, with laboratory instruction, on a Biological subject. Further particulars will be announced later.

Cost.

Ticket for the Meeting, £2 2s.; for either part, £1 10s. Working men and women (i.e., those in receipt of weekly wages) can obtain tickets at half-price. For such tickets application must be made through the Hon. Secretary to the Local Committee in the Centre to which the student belongs, or through the General Secretary of the Workers' Educational Association, 16 Harpur Street, Theobald's Road, London, W.C.1. For Special Classes, if arranged, and for the laboratory course in Biology, an extra fee will be charged.

The Delegacy reserves the right of declining any application for tickets.

Accommodation.

Women Students will be received at some of the Women's Colleges, and a list of lodgings (price 6d.) will be obtainable from the Delegacy.

Guide to Reading.

For preparatory reading a list of books will shortly be obtainable from the Delegacy (price 4d. post free).

A detailed programme will also be then obtainable (gratis) from the Rev. F. E. HUTCHINSON, M.A., Acland House, Broad Street, Oxford.

